

(Mr. PHELPS,) was one of no slight or trifling importance. Endorsed by the most solemn and unequivocal sanction of the whole people of Maryland, it commended itself with weight and seriousness to the earnest and deep consideration of every member of the Convention. Quite content himself, in listening to the remarks of others, he, (Mr. D.,) would have gladly obeyed the dictates of his own feelings and inclinations—by giving his vote cheerfully and without the utterance of a single word, in accordance with the commands of that sovereign will, so clearly, and so plainly manifested. But the debate which had arisen since the agitation of this subject had been singular in many respects—expressions had fallen, and arguments deduced so novel and surprising in their character, as to require that an answer should be at once, directly, and promptly given. He should shrink from no duty attached to his position as a representative to whom a portion of the community had confided their interests. And however reluctant at all times to assail the opinions and doctrines of others, he should never, for a moment, hesitate to speak fearlessly, whenever in his judgment their interests seemed to demand it. Like the distinguished gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Thomas,) whose eloquence was heard with so much pleasure—he had long looked upon the biennial policy as part and parcel of the great fundamental law of the land. As having been directly inserted and placed amid its provisions by the irresistible fiat and authority of the very source of all power itself. Sir, this is not the first time the discussion of this subject had been agitated within these halls or disturbed the popular mind. Every one was as familiar with its object, design, and tendency as with any political event of the past or present day. Years ago its policy was tried by the fiery ordeal of public sentiment. It was alike the theme of the hustings and the argument that filled the columns of every newspaper in the land. And eventually it sprang into full vitality and being, consecrated by the direct and distinct sanction of the popular vote. All here knew and well-remembered the peculiar history of the measure. It was useless to trace it distinctly through all its course, or in its every progressive step. Abundant precaution had been taken to prevent the slightest degree of surprise. There was no unwise hurry, no unsafe dispatch. Full time was given for the exercise of the most serious and calm reflection, and for the use of the ablest and soundest discretion. And the result was a manifestation, so triumphant and overwhelming, that no one for a moment could be mistaken in its character. Judgment, final and conclusive, clear and explicit, had been promptly rendered by the only majesty recognized and revered by freemen. And all had bowed deferentially and willingly to such mandate. The Legislature that succeeded the ratification by the people, at once engrafted the provision as part of the organic law, and the record of the times will show how slight and feeble was the resistance then made to that “voice” which our noble old Commonwealth had echoed from every quarter. Under such circumstances and with such historic

recollections fresh upon his memory, he had witnessed the undisguised hostility exhibited by very many upon this floor against this great measure of economy and reform, with a feeling of wonder and amazement. “’Twas strange, ’twas passing strange,” to see how speedily and completely time, with its despoiling touch, had wiped away every impression and vestage of the recent past, though it had been made even by the sovereign hand. ’Twas wonderful that those who professed to drink “par excellence” from the very fount of Democracy—who worshiped at no other political shrine, and bowed to no other political God—should have so soon not only scoffed at the mandates, but absolutely by their speeches rebuked the very wisdom of the people. Democracy did indeed assume strange guises, and well might the delusive resemblance be at times mistaken for the pure reality.

No one could be surprised at the course which had been taken by the whole distinguished delegation from the county of Anne Arundel; recognising, as they doubtless did, the sacred relation that existed between constituent and representative, they had faithfully and honestly shadowed forth the trust and sentiment that was entrusted to their keeping. Nor was he in the least degree disposed to find fault with the kind and hospitable community around him. They were, after all, like the rest of us, but human beings, endowed with the virtues and the frailties that belong to our common nature; and all history had shown, that the wisest judgments had been discolored and perverted by the “cunning of interest,” even when guarded by the most exalted integrity. No doubt, their convictions of propriety sprang from the most conscious exercise of all their reasoning faculties, and surely the views of no section of the State were more legitimately entitled to be heard with deference, within the walls of the capitol. But other gentlemen had opposed the amendment already alluded to, whose views did not seem to be in harmony with the constituency they represented, at least so far as the returns of the vote given upon that subject might indicate. Familiar with that people from whose bosom they had come, it might be that they justified themselves by the belief that a change, great and radical, had been effected—that they were even now anxious to reverse the judgment which they had so recently given with such general and singular unanimity; and though it had already been announced from a high source that every thing was in a state of mutation and revolution—that change was written upon the whole moral and physical world—until some more substantial evidence than mere conjecture had been given, he should be unwilling to believe that the people, like bubbles upon the water, were liable to be blown hither and thither by every passing whim and momentary caprice. Nations and communities, like individuals, might be fickle in their moods and wayward in their course, but they seldom departed from that line of policy which had been sanctioned by the maturest reflections, and in the propriety of which their judgments and their interests alike concurred. We are told, however, that apart from these con-